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A Consideration of Genre Approach to Writing

TEACHER VS. PEER SCAFFOLDING MODES IN L2 WRITING CLASSES: A CONSIDERATION OF GENRE APPROACH TO WRITING

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Abstract

While it is not a long time that scaffolding is applied in writing classes, few attempts have been made to identify the scaffolding mechanisms that teachers and peers employ in face-to-face interactions to help students develop requirements of different genres of writing. Therefore, this study was conducted aiming at investigating the scaffolding behaviors and mechanisms that the teacher and peers employed while revising two genres of writing, i.e. description and essay, written by the students of two classes who were assigned to teacher and peer scaffolding. Vygotsky's Socio-cultural framework and its related notion of scaffolding metaphor were used in this study. To identify the scaffolding behaviors, the verbal interaction between the students and the teacher and peer mediators was recorded, transcribed and coded, using Lidz's scale (1991). Based on the findings of the study, the difference between the teacher's and peers' scaffolding behaviors in the two genres of writing was significant, illustrating the fact that not only the teacher and peer mediators offered different numbers of scaffolding behaviors, but also the type of these behaviors was at times different from a particular genre of writing to another. Finally, some pedagogical implications of Socio-cultural Theory in EFL/ESL writing classes are provided.

Keywords: genres approach, scaffolding, Sociocultural Theory (SCT), Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), teacher and peer mediators, writing

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INTRODUCTION: IMPORTANT CONCEPTS IN SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

A review of Socio-cultural Theory (SCT) studies on L2 issues demonstrates that most of these studies include SCT key terms such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, and assisted performance. The ZPD, which is the most well-known and greatest construct in SCT, is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Yee (2011) emphasizes the important implications of the ZPD for instruction and believes that "The effects of the model of development counter to the ZPD can be seen in the education provided to retarded children, who possess limited capability in abstract thinking" (p. 8).

On the other hand, the original idea of scaffolding which is at the heart of Vygotskian SCT demonstrates "how guidance supports developmental learning through the ZPD" (Schwieter, 2010, p. 31) and it is within the ZPD that scaffolding occurs. The original idea of scaffolding came from the work of Bruner (1983) who defines scaffolding as "A process of 'setting up' a situation to make the child's entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it" (p. 60). Later on, Donato (1994) described scaffolding as a mechanism in which "a knowledgeable participant creates, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the novice can participate and extend the current skill and knowledge to higher levels of competence" (p. 48). Speech or language is considered as the most powerful mediation tool of all (Walqui, 2006) in that it is through dialogic interaction that understanding and comprehensibility is achieved. Mantero (2002) has also examined pedagogical implications of ascribing to SCT within foreign language classrooms and emphasizes that because of various constraints, instructors should use dialogue as verbal scaffolds into discourse; for scaffolding to be effective, "understanding is co-constructed during the verbal dialogue of the ZPD" (Barnard & Campbell, 2005, p.77) (also see Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Lantolf, 2000).

A group of researchers have tried to specify the functions of scaffolding. Wood et al. (1976) outlined the functions of scaffolding as follows: 1) Recruiting interest in the task; 2) Simplifying the task; 3) Maintaining pursuit of the goal; 4) Making critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced, and the ideal solution; 5) Controlling frustration during problem solving; 6) Demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed. Similarly, Clarke & Graves

(2004) argued "What makes scaffolding so effective is that it enables a teacher to keep a task whole, while students learn to understand and manage the parts, and presents the learner with just the right challenge"(p. 571). These analogies embody important features of scaffolding which aim at enabling a novice to solve a problem or to carry out a task or in general to reach higher levels of achievement. However, it is also worth noting that scaffolding does not necessarily result in improvement. As such, many researchers differ in their views concerning the value of the metaphor of scaffolding as a mechanism for learner's learning. For example, Bliss and Askew's (2006) study, examining the concepts of scaffolding and ZPD in schooling context, revealed that scaffolding was not always successful because, on the one hand, some concepts were only part of the teacher's knowledge; thus, they were hard to scaffold, and on the other hand, teachers were limited in their domain knowledge and had problem understanding the pupil's answers and finding appropriate responses.

APPLICATION OF SCT IN L2 WRITING

It is believed that students have a great deal of competence which is not manifested in typical writing classes. There are different strategies that writers use when they write. Students write better in a supportive environment, allowing them to cope with the obstacles of writing by the help of more expert partners because "producing discourse without a conversation partner-which is what writing amounts to- is a formidable task for novices" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. XIV). As such, nowadays, process approach to writing which is based on SCT and the notion of scaffolding is applied in writing classes by teachers as this construct operates on the assumption that human cognitive development is highly dependent upon the social context within which it takes place. Moreover, interaction has widely been acknowledged as an essential component of learning, and investigating the students' written product tells very little about the process of writing and how writers generate ideas, record and revise them. As Pritchard and Honeycutt (2006) suggest, "Implementation of best practices in teaching the process approach involves adopting a comprehensive, holistic instructional model including understanding the limitations of the approach, its theoretical underpinnings, and the supporting research literature" (p.29)

Viewing process writing as a "mental recursive process with procedural strategies for completing writing tasks" is now widely held by practitioners in this field (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p.277). According to Graham and Perin (2008), process writing is one of the major elements

found to be effective in adolescent students' learning to write well and to use writing as a tool for learning. They believe that:

The process writing approach involves a number of interwoven activities, including creating extended opportunities for writing; emphasizing writing for real audiences; encouraging cycles of planning, translating, and reviewing; stressing personal responsibility and ownership of writing projects; facilitating high levels of student interactions; developing supportive writing environments; encouraging self-reflection and evaluation; and offering personalized individual assistance, brief instructional lessons to meet students' individual needs, and, in some instances, more extended and systematic instruction (p. 19).

Due to the importance of process writing in recent decades, the focus of most of the researchers and educators has shifted to the quality of adult or knowledgeable peers' interventions and scaffolding behaviors. This phenomenon is increasingly applied in L2 classes and many studies are conducted to identify the scaffolding behaviors which help students to reach higher levels of proficiency in writing.

Originally, Vygotsky's formulation of the ZPD is concerned with the interaction between 'expert' and 'novice' (Clark & Graves, 2004; Cottrel & Cohen, 2003; Gillies & Boyle, 2005). So, in the educational context, scaffolding is defined as the semiotic mediation between teachers and learners in the sense that it is the interaction of teachers and students that has the potential to influence understanding and learning. Cottrel & Cohen (2003) examined how a group of English learners were guided by means of teacher scaffolding through the process of producing their first academic essays. The following features of scaffolding in the writing program supported the gradual acquisition of writing competence by the learner: 1) Topics linked to concurrent study themes, 2) Predetermined essay structure, 3) Assistance in locating appropriate texts and data, 4) Staging of instruction, 5) Modeling of composition process, 6) Focus on language, 7) Feedback from peers and tutors (Also see, Felton & Herko, 2004). Another study was conducted by Laksmi (2006), demonstrating that students became more confident in expressing their ideas in writings after implementation of scaffolding in the process of writing.

While the first studies on scaffolding were mainly concerned with interaction between expert and novice, e.g. teacher and students, current

sociocultural theorists extended the concept of scaffolding to include other forms of collaborative activity, including pair work among peers. Donato (1994) specifically explored the notion of 'mutual scaffolding' among L2 learners. She made an attempt to explain that peers can scaffold one another in much the same way as experts scaffold novices (see for example, Tudge, 1999). SCT supports the use of peer scaffolding particularly in writing classes since it views development as a result of social interaction in which an individual learns to extend his competence through the guidance of a more experienced individual. Because of the popularity of peer revision in L2 writing classes, a good deal of empirical studies are implemented to examine different aspects of L2 peer revision (Conner & Asenavage, 1994; Dipardo & Freedman, 1987; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Stanley, 1992; Villamil & Guerrero, 1996, 1998).

In an attempt to identify patterns of scaffolding behavior, Guerrero and Villamil's (2000) studied peer collaboration in an ESL writing classroom and illustrated several scaffolding behaviors, based on Lidz's scale as used by the peer mediator. In general, the findings of the study revealed that the peer mediator's performance in this study displayed mainly: (a) *Intentionality*: willingness to influence his partner's action, to keep the interaction going, and to accomplish goals; (b) *Task regulation*: efforts at making the task manageable for both and inducing solutions to textual problems; (c) *Meaning*: promoting understanding by focusing on what was not clear or discrepant and eliciting clarification or correction; and (d) *Contingent Responsivity*: ability to read his partner's cues especially affective ones and respond accordingly. The emergence of the writer's self-regulation and his growth as a more independent writer and reviser was also gradually witnessed. In general, the effect of scaffolding in this interaction was mutual. As the students reciprocally extended support and task regulation became more symmetrical, important lessons were shared and new knowledge was learned.

To bridge the transition from the students' verbal debates to the written essay, Felton and Herko (2004) created a multilayered writing workshop consisting of structured reading, debate, and meta-cognitive reflection to scaffold the students' written argument. The workshop contained several parts involving work on vocabulary and structure of argument including a *position* on a topic, one or more *reasons* to support that position, *explanation* for those reasons, and *proof* to support both the reasons and explanations, working in pairs while each one represents one side of the issue, reviewing the argument, and revising their essays. The workshop provided the students with, among the other things, a schema for structuring the students' arguments. Due to some writing problems, namely

first language transfer in text organization and lack of connection between writing topics and real experiences among Chinese EFL college students, Li et al. (2007) explored how visualization techniques were used by peers as structural scaffolding to stimulate opportunities for limited-experience learners. The expert writers provided scaffolding within ZPD by employing communicative language and examining writing products. Of all the scaffolding strategies, reacting, clarifying, response to advice and advising and eliciting were the most frequently used ones.

Also of interest are studies comparing the impact of peer and teacher feedback (Rezaei, 2009; 2012), though such investigations have been quite scarce. For instance, Chaudron (1984) found that there was not a significant difference between the amount of improvement resulting from teacher and peer feedback after receiving teacher and peer feedback. Myhill & Warren's (2005) study resulted in identification of several instances of unsuccessful scaffolds; however, they were associated with peer-mediators who were recognized as less knowledgeable mediators. It is important to keep in mind that students are still learning the language and sometimes it is difficult for them to interpret what they mean, transfer what they know, offer appropriate solutions and so forth. Therefore, there is no guarantee that the meaning that is created when two peers interact will be at a higher level.

GENRE APPROACH TO WRITING

Vygotsky's ideas can be traced in process approaches to writing in which social aspect of teaching and learning becomes an important part of the writing classroom, specifically those classes in which genre approaches to writing are implemented. The theoretical foundation of genre approach is firmly premised in Vygotsky's ideas of language as a social tool for communication. Besides the concern about form, genre-based approaches deal with the social purposes of language. In genre-based writing classes, the focus is on the understanding and production of selected genres of texts. Writing genres are usually classified in broad categories such as, 'description', 'argumentation', etc. These classifications are based on "what the discourse seeks to achieve or to *do* socially" (Lin, 2006, p. 69).

Due to its importance, a strand of research particularly examines the role of scaffolding as far as the genre approach to writing is considered. Emilia (2005) conducted a genre-based approach in which the application of scaffolding strategies was found to be of great importance in developing Indonesian students' academic writing ability. Lin (2006) studied the roles played by model texts as well as contextual and textual exploration involving both teachers and students in the co-construction of knowledge and skills in third-year English writing courses. They adopted a genre-based

framework to facilitate clear links to the students' purposes for writing beyond the writing classroom. The researchers found that the majority of the students were able to produce at least functionally effective writing in each genre, though not with entire accuracy, thus, move at least some way through their ZPDs. Firkins et al. (2007) integrated instructional scaffolding techniques with three cycles of teaching including modeling a text, joint and independent construction of a text under the genre-based and activity-based pedagogical approaches. They found that the genre approach coupled with a sequenced and well-structured teaching methodology was an effective way to teach writing to students; they assisted students to organize their writing and understand the nature of a text within an activity-based context with texts that can be deconstructed and reconstructed using concrete examples. The findings of the study by Kurnia (2009) revealed that scaffolding instruction significantly improved the students' writing in the descriptive genre.

On the whole, the overview of the above studies and contradictory results suggest that the findings of the efficacy of teacher and peer scaffolding are preliminary in nature as this mode of communication is still relatively rare in most classrooms, specifically in the Iranian academic setting. Within sociocultural framework, the focus is rather on the interaction the students engage in while producing and revising their compositions given the shift from emphasis on product to process of writing which leads to improvements on writing attitudes and products (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; 2007). According to Pritchard & Honeycutt (2007) "in the process approach, not every prewriting activity will lead to a final draft but students' understanding of the movement from first idea to finished product is an essential feature" (p. 30). Also, as far as genre-based approaches to writing are concerned, the focus is mostly on the structure of the genres, so the students' structural awareness is promoted. However, the verbal interaction of the students and the scaffolding behaviors they employ while producing and revising different genres of writing are left uninvestigated and their application in some contexts such as Iran appears to be highly limited, hence, need to be subjected to more inquiries. In addition, the study of scaffolding behaviors has mostly been restricted to general academic writing rather than genre-based approaches to language learning that have recently gained an important place in language learning and teaching. So, there is a need to study the success of process writing in different genres (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006).

OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Motivated by previous studies on scaffolding in writing classes and the existing gap in literature, we integrated scaffolding in this study as a teaching mechanism due to its significance and influence on L2 learning and particularly on writing. Since the application of scaffolding and its impact was to some extent unknown and unique to Iranian educators, to account for potential advantages of this concept, the teacher and peer mediating behaviors in a genre-based writing classroom was investigated. The study aimed to determine if scaffolding behaviors vary from one genre to the other and from teacher mediators to peer mediators. Therefore, the present study intended to determine the scaffolding behaviors that the teacher and peers employed while producing two genres of writing, that is description of a graph and essay writing. Simply put, the study attempted to find answer to the following questions:

- 1) What type and degree of scaffolding behaviors are used by the teacher and peer mediators in producing different genres of writing?
- 2) Is there a difference between the teacher and peers' scaffolding behaviors in two genres of writing?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Participants

The study was conducted on two writing classes of students studying at the Department of Computer and Industrial Engineering of Mazandaran University of Science and Technology, Iran. There was an attempt to select those students within the same proficiency level. To do this, their scores in the placement test they took in the department as well as those of the previous English course were used to find the students in the intermediate level of proficiency. Based on their scores, the first class contained 15 students while the second class contained 10 students. They were all sophomores and required to take part in a compulsory writing class which complemented the General English course, held one session per week during the term. The two groups were almost the same in all respects including materials and activities except for the scaffolding pattern.

Instruments

The materials used were the writing parts of Insights to IELTS Extra (Jakeman & McDowell, 2003) and IELTS Preparation and Practice (Sahanaya et al., 2003) that involved various modes of writing such as essay

writing, description of graphs, trends, etc., making it possible to investigate the relationship between specific scaffolding behaviors and particular modes of writing. It is worth mentioning that the essay writing task requires the students to produce well-organized 5- paragraph essays which reflect their personal point of view on some agree/disagree, argumentative, etc topics. For an essay to be considered as well-developed, it often should contain at least 250 words. However, the description of a graph task necessitates students to correctly understand and interpret graphs, usually using comparative forms. A description of a graph usually contains at least 150 words. Examples of the writing tasks practiced in this study can be seen in

Procedure

In both writing classes, the students were presented with two genres of writing – description and essay writing- for which they were required to hand in some compositions. For the purpose of the study, the students of both classes were randomly assigned to teacher and peer scaffolding. To elaborate, the first class, containing 15 students, used teacher scaffolding. The students in this class were divided into four groups. For every writing assignment, they handed in their papers a week earlier than the revision session, and the teacher determined which compositions in each group should be revised, based on the frequency and type of trouble sources found in the students' writing. Following Guerrero and Villamil (2000), trouble source is defined "as a perceived or potential problem, error, or deficiency in the text (p. 56). As the students in each group tried to read and correct the given writing, the teacher moved around the class, spending some time at each group to help the students to revise their writings. It is important to note that although in few cases the teacher underlined the trouble sources as a clue for students, it was through reading and discussing the writings that the trouble sources had been identified. Since the purpose of the study was to compare the teacher-mediated behavior with those offered by peer-mediators in another class, only the teacher-mediated behaviors were codified, although a few mediations had also been given by the members of each group.

On the other hand, the students of the second class were asked to form five pairs at random so that a more proficient student worked with the students in need of help. To determine who the more capable peer of each pair was, the students of this class were given a general topic to write about. The writings were later scored by the teacher, using ESL Composition Profile (Hartfiel et al., 1985), who determined which of the students in each pair has his/her composition revised. Consequently, the “writer” (the

students whose writing needed more correction) and “reader” (the more knowledgeable student) of the pairs were selected, while they were not informed of the reader-writer roles (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). Then, the readers were trained on how to help the writers revise their compositions. To elaborate, before the peer scaffolding project began, a session was held in which the “readers” were explained and justified about the concept of scaffolding and what they were expected to do throughout the experimental period. They were also informed that the focus would be not only on form but also on meaning. After each session of revision, the students were asked to work on a final draft of their composition and submit it a week later. This process continued throughout a term for 12 weeks.

To analyze the data on the verbal interaction obtained from all revision sessions during the term (twelve weeks), a total of 36 hours of verbal scaffolding between teacher-students and peers (18 hours in each class) in the revision sessions was tape-recorded and transcribed. Although some parts of the students’ interaction were in Persian, to facilitate understanding, an English version of the episodes was produced. Then, the transcripts were segmented to episodes, i.e. the units of discourse dealing with each trouble source point (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). The episodes were then coded based on Lidz’s Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) Rating Scale which was one of the early efforts to apply the notion of scaffolding and had been developed based on Feuerstein’s model (1980), to assess the degree to which MLE characterizes the interactions of any experts with novices. For Lidz, scaffolding describes “the mediator’s adjusting the complexity and maturity of the teaching interaction to facilitate the child’s mastery of the task, providing support when necessary, and encouragement and prompts to the child to move ahead when ready” (p.80). She believed that MLE scale is significant since 1) it can be used with mothers and teachers and has the potential for use with a broader age span, 2) it is a summary of the multitude of factors occurring within teaching and parenting relationships that may influence the child’s cognitive development, 3) it reflects all joint theory, assessment, intervention, and research, 4) it is intended to emphasize the qualitative nature of the mediator-child interaction, to be usable by practitioners in the field, to be easily taught and learned, and to yield meaningful information derived from brief observations. This detailed scale (also reinterpreted by Schwieter, 2010) underwent some modifications and reinterpretations to match the existing data (Table 1). The last component of the scale, i.e. change, was not used in the study as it was not observed in the mediators’ behaviors in the current study. The intra-coder reliability of codification was 94.90. Also, to establish inter-coder reliability, the researchers plus an independent rater skillful in utilizing ESL Composition Profile, scored ten percent of the data

(20 pages). The inter-coder reliability was 76.95; however, the disagreement was solved through discussion.

TABLE 1
 Lidz's components of assisted learning via scaffolding

1. Intentionality	influence the learner's actions through interaction, engagement of attention, and goals.
2. Meaning	highlight important aspects, mark relevant differences, and elaborate detailed information.
3. Transcendence	draw on learner's past experiences and potential future ones.
4. Sharing joint regard	visualize the learner's work through his/her eyes.
5. Sharing of experience	share experiences that may stimulate new ideas.
6. Task regulation	manipulate the task to facilitate problem solving and induce strategic thinking.
7. Praise/encouragement	encourage the learner so that he/she has does something good to boost self-esteem.
8. Challenge	challenge the learner within but not beyond his/her ZPD.
9. Psychological differentiation	remember that learning experience is the learner's not the expert's to avoid competition.
10. Contingent responsivity	be familiar with the learner's behavior and respond to it appropriately.
11. Affective involvement	give the learner a sense of caring and enjoyment in the task.
12. Change	find areas of improvement and communicate them to the learner.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1

What type and degree of scaffolding behaviors are used by the teacher and peer mediators in producing different genres of writing?

The type of different scaffolding as well as the frequency and percentage of each behavior used by the teacher and peer mediator is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Frequency and percentage of scaffolding behaviors used by peer mediators
in the two writing genres

Scaffolding behavior	Teacher		peer	
	Graph	Essay	Graph	Essay
1. Intentionality	241	326 (31%)	172	108
2. Meaning	(32.22%)	24 (2.29%)	(36.29%)	(30.59%)
3. Transcendence	29 (3.88%)	23 (2.19%)	9 (1.9%)	2 (0.57%)
4. Joint regard	22 (2.94%)	77 (7.34%)	6(1.27%)	9 (2.55%)
5. Sharing of experience	58 (7.75%)	0 (0.0%)	83 (17.51%)	20 (5.67%)
6. Task regulation	1(0.13%)	114	5(1.05%)	1 (0.28%)
7. Praise and encouragement	104 (13.9%)	(10.87%)	35 (7.38%)	31 (8.78%)
8. Challenge	60 (8.02%)	87 (8.29%)	12 (2.53%)	24 (6.8%)
9. Psychological differentiation	17 (2.27%)	38 (3.62%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.28%)
10. Contingent responsivity	145	220	91 (19.2%)	105
11. Affective involvement	(19.38%)	(20.97%)	61 (12.87%)	(29.75%)
	63 (8.42%)	115	0 (0.0%)	50 (14.16%)
	8 (1.07%)	(10.96%)		2 (0.57%)
		25 (2.38%)		
Total	748	1,049	474	353

As shown in Table 2, the teacher used more scaffolding behaviors than peers in both genres of writing, i.e. Essay (1,049 vs. 353) and Graph (748 vs. 474); thus, she created more scaffolding environment for the students' interaction.

Findings of the Teacher-Mediated Class: As shown in Table 1, the teacher employed more scaffolding behavior in essay writing (1,049) than in description of a graph (748). The highest percentage in both genres belonged to the component of *Intentionality* that the teacher used almost at the same rate during both graph and essay writing (Graph: 32.22% & Essay: 31%). . *Intentionality* refers to conscious attempt of the mediator to influence the student's behavior as shown in the following excerpt:

T: Well, what are you going to do next?

S: To describe the main ideas.

T: Right. How do you describe them?

S: Give some statistics.

As can be seen above, by asking questions the teacher tries to engage the learner's attention to a trouble source found in the writing and involves

him in the process of correcting it. This is a conscious attempt to change the learner's behavior.

The second most frequently used behavior was *Psychological Differentiation*, the difference of which was not significant in the two writing genres (Graph: 19.38% & Essay: 20.97%). This objective was mainly obtained by keeping a distance between the teacher and students. Consider the following excerpt of an interaction between the teacher and a student.

T: Well, what's *your* second idea? Please read it aloud.

S: One should understand the rules he must follow in a company.

T: Please continue. How did *you* support it?

S: That's all!

T: But *you* need some clarifications to convince the readers that *your* main idea is true.

According to this excerpt, the teacher's speech is characterized by the frequent use of the pronoun "you" and possessive pronoun "your", showing the tendency of the teacher to maintain an objective stance in the interaction so that the students can function independently and can take responsibility for their own writing. Moreover, as it is the case especially with essay writing, students need to reflect their own ideas than those of the teacher. *Task Regulation*, the third highly used behavior, comprised a high proportion of the total percentage (Graph: 13.9% & Essay: 10.87%). Look at the following excerpt which demonstrates an example of the way the teacher engages a student in regulating a task:

S: Managers should make the right decisions.

T: Well...

S: I can say, as an instance, that if the manager doesn't make the right decision, hum....

T: What happens if he doesn't make the right decision?

S: Hum ... I don't know.

T: You may provide an example of a bad decision.

S: Buying non-profitable goods, hum...

T: leads to What happens if they buy non-profitable goods?

S: It can bankrupt the factory.

As shown in the above interaction, the student has difficulty supporting a main idea by providing a convincing example. To make this task manageable, the teacher suggests her to think of a bad decision by posing "You may provide an example of a bad decision." After finding a bad decision, the teacher made the student think about the consequences of the wrong decision by asking "What happens if they buy non-profitable goods?" The process may continue in variety of ways including manipulating or simplifying the task and offering principles of solution until the task is totally managed.

According to the results of Chi-square test, the difference between the teacher scaffolding behaviors in the two genres of writing was significant [$p = .00$]. Generally, behaviors observed in the current study were in line with those of Gillies and Boyle's (2005) study, revealing many of the above components in the teachers' behaviors including control, questions, and disciplines. (For more information, see Guerrero & Villamil, 2000).

Findings of the Peer-Mediated Class: unlike the results observed in the teacher-mediated class, the peers' use of scaffolding behaviors in description of a graph was higher in essay writing (474 vs. 353), suggesting that the students had been offered more scaffolded help in description of a graph than in essay writing.

In this class, the most frequently used components in both genres of writing were *Intentionality* (Essay: 30.59% vs. Graph: 36.26%) and *Psychological Differentiation* (Essay: 29.75% vs. Graph: 19.2%). To illustrate, the difference between *Psychological Differentiation* rates in the two genres of writing, look at the excerpt of the interaction between the reader and writer student while revising an essay.

R: Please read the next line.

S: I'd also spend much money for travelling.

R: Providing a simple example is never enough. The more *you* provide explanation, the more the readers of *your* writing are convinced that *your* main idea is right.

S: What should I write?

R: Think of other ways *you* can enjoy *your* money.

As discussed earlier, in essay writing students have to generate their own ideas and their writing usually reflects the students' personal voices and attitudes. So, by addressing the writers and making them think about and reflect their own ideas, the mediators try to maintain a distance between them and the student writers.

As opposed to *Psychological Differentiation*, *Joint Regard* is defined as maintaining a shared focus and understanding. *Joint Regard* was the third highly used behavior in description of a graph (17.51%) while the percentage was very low in essay writing (5.67%). In other words, peers tried to maintain a shared focus on graph writing while they preserved an objective stance in essay writing. One possible explanation is that in description of a graph, both the mediator and the student writers look at the object of focus (graph) initiated by the student. Since both of them have the same target, the mediators have a tendency to view the object from the eyes of the writer. This component is usually manifested in mediator's use of "we" than "you" when commenting on the written compositions, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

W: This graph contrasts the number of visitors in two music sites.

R: We'd better replace 'compare' with 'contrast'.

W: That's right. At the first day, 12,000 people visited the Pop Parade site. In the third day peaked the number of visits.

R: I think the second sentence is incorrect. *Let's* express it in another way.

W: What can *we* write instead?

Contingent Responsivity was another highly employed component the percentage of which was higher in essay writing than description of a graph (14.16% vs. 12.87%). *Contingent Responsivity* is defined as well-timed and appropriate response to students' cues and signals, as follows:

R: What's your thesis statement?

W: Humm...

R: thesis statement is the very general statement that covers all the materials in your writing.

W: Do you mean my topic?

R: Yes, to some extent. Please read your first sentence.

W: It is very important to have some saving for hard times in life.

R: Good.

As shown, the writer couldn't answer the reader's question "What's your thesis statement?" Observing this signal, the reader realized the writer's confusion of the term "thesis statement" and clarified the meaning of the term and, thus, provided a contingent response to her need.

These findings are consistent with those of Guerrero and Villamil's (2000) study who identified most of the above behaviors while the peers were engaged in revising their writings. They concluded that peers were also able to use a variety of scaffolding behaviors to assist their partners with the task. Overall, according to the result of Chi-square test, the difference between the peer behaviors in the two genres of writing was significant ($p=.00$).

Research Question 2

Is there a difference between the teacher and peers' scaffolding behaviors in the two genres of writing?

To answer the second question, a comparison was made between the teacher and peers' use of the components of the MLE scales in the two genres of writing, the result of which is shown in Figures 1 & 2.

Figure 1: Percentage of the scaffolding behaviors in essay genre of writing in the teacher and peer-mediated classes

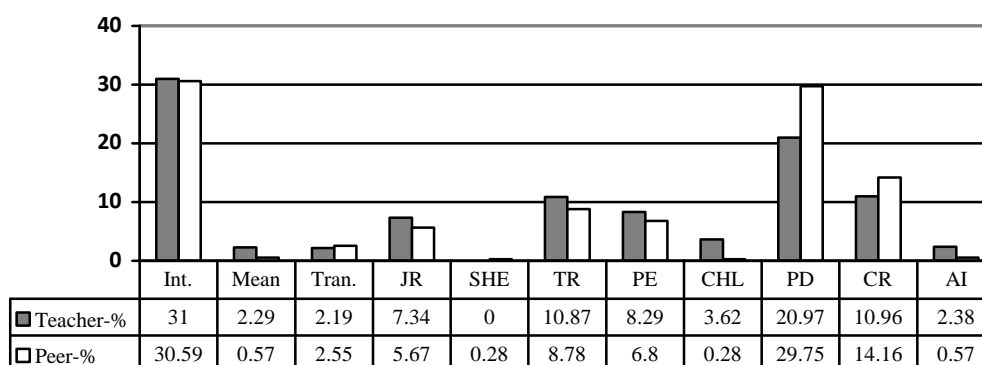
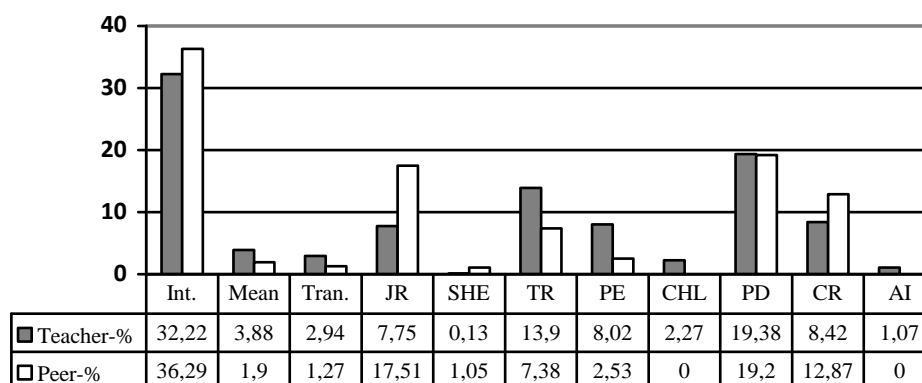


Figure 2: Percentage of the scaffolding behaviors in description genre of writing in the teacher and peer-mediated class



According to the results, the components of *Intentionality* was the most frequently used behaviors by the teacher and peer mediators in essay writing (T: 31% / P: 30.59%) and description of a graph (T: 32.22% / P: 36.29). The second frequently used behavior was *Psychological Differentiation*, applied considerably by both mediators in essay writing (T: 20.97% / P: 29.75%) and description of a graph (T: 19.38% / P: 19.2%). The difference between the teacher and peer's use of some other frequent scaffolding behaviors was sharper. The percentage of the *Contingent Responsivity* was lower in the teacher-mediated class in both essay writing (T: 10.96% / P: 14.16%) and description of a graph (T: 8.42% / P: 12.87%). In peer-mediated classes where students are paired up, each mediator is responsible for mediating one novice and is responsive just to the needs of that learner. The situation is different in the teacher-mediated class where a single teacher is usually overwhelmed by responding to many students' needs. Given this fact, it is not surprising that the level of teacher's responsivity would decrease due to population of the class and time constraints. On the other hand, *Task Regulation* was a highly used component that peer mediators employed less than the teacher mediator in essay writing (T: 10.87% / P: 8.78%) and description of a graph (T: 13.9% / P: 7.38%) since instead of regulating the task, the peers usually resort to correction and solve immediate difficulties. Consider the following example:

W: "Next day, the number of Pop Parade visitors jumped"

R: W must give the number of visitors too.

W: How come?

R: write "next day, the number of Pop Parade visitors jumped to 120,000.

As seen in the above excerpt, identifying a deficiency in the sentence, namely the number of visitors, the reader corrects the erroneous part of the sentence, rather than regulating the task and helping the writer to include the numbers in her sentence herself (Rezaei, 2012).

Joint Regard was another frequent behavior used at different degrees by the teacher and peer mediators in essay writing (T: 7.34% / P: 5.67%) and description of a graph (T: 7.75% / P: 17.51%), indicating the maintenance of a shared focus through the activity. The value of utilizing this behavior lies in the fact that visualizing the learner's work through his/her eyes, the mediator assumes a "joint responsibility for revising the text" (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p. 86). Finally, *Praise and Encouragement* was one of the most frequent behaviors employed by the teacher and peer mediators in both essay writings (T: 8.29% / P: 6.8%). As shown in the following excerpt, *Praise and Encouragement* was mostly achieved by frequent statements of "good", "fine", etc.

T: Please change the structure of the sentence.

S: Understanding the rules is a basic requirement of a job.

T: It's better. Good.

The result of Chi-square test revealed that the difference between the teacher and peer mediators' use of the scaffolding behaviors in the two genres of essay writing and description of a graph was significant ($p = .00$), illustrating that the teacher and peer mediators had different preferences in utilizing a particular scaffolding behavior than the other in different genres of writing.

Overall Findings: Although the nature or type of scaffolding behaviors used by the teacher and peer mediators was sometimes similar, with *Intentionality* and *Psychological Differentiation*, being the most frequent scaffolding behaviors in both classes, the pattern of mediation, i.e. the order and the amount of their usage, was not the similar as far as different genres of writing were concerned. Among the eleven mediating behaviors suggested by Lidz (1991), six behaviors were used frequently by both teacher and peer mediators (89.69 and 95.78 respectively) whereas the other behaviors received little or no attention on the part of the mediators. The results of the present study was both in line and in contrast with those found by other practitioners in the field; however, it is worth mentioning that in the

above mentioned studies, the scaffolding behaviors were identified and observed regardless of particular genre of writing, while the present study paid particular attention to identifying the mediating behaviors in the two genres of writing.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

In the current study, a genre approach to writing was implemented within sociocultural pedagogy, emphasizing that "the zone of proximal development is not a sparsely populated territory inhabited by isolated struggling individuals, but, ideally at least, a convivial community inhabited collaboratively by writer, teacher, peers and other readers" (Tremmel, 1990, p.81). The teacher and peer scaffolding behaviors were addressed while the main objective of this study was to develop requirements of different genres of writing within sociocultural framework and particularly through scaffolding. Moreover, there was an attempt to find out the extent to which the teacher and peers tried to apply these behaviors. The impetus for the study originated from the fact that to date very few attempts have been made to apply the notion of scaffolding in genre-based writing classes (Rezaei, 2009; 2012). Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are derived:

The teacher used more scaffolding behaviors than peers, thus producing more mediated environment for the student writers. Both the teacher and peer mediators used a variety of scaffolding strategies that were more or less of the same nature, but used at different rates and orders by them, suggesting that varying types and amounts of scaffolding behaviors may be used by different mediators.

Producing different genres of writing necessitates application of a variety of scaffolding behaviors. However, these behaviors differ from one genre of writing to another at times. In other words, the use of particular scaffolding behaviors has to do with the genre of writing. To illustrate, different writing genres conform to certain conventions, and "if a student is to be successful in joining a particular English-language discourse community, the student will need to be able to produce texts which fulfill the expectations of its readers in regards to grammar, organization, and context" (Muncie, 2000 cited in Kim & Kim, 2005, p. 5). This, in turn, may lead to the application of varying degrees and types of scaffolding behaviors. For instance, the occurrence of *Joint Regard* is more likely in a genre like description of a graph in which both the mediator and student writer share the same viewpoint.

The degree to which scaffolding is offered also has to do with the complexity or length of the writing mode. For example, description of a graph is usually shorter in length and the image (graph) to be described is before the students' eyes so he/she does not have to produce his/her own ideas and it is expected that this may make the task less demanding for the students, suggesting that less scaffolding behavior is needed. On the other hand, in essay writing the students are initially faced with much thinking load. They know less about what to write, but usually have to produce longer texts; thus, more mediated help may be required to make them produce and support their ideas. Moreover, essay writing makes particular demands on the student including making sense of a topic, and communicating what he or she knows within the framework of a formal, ordered statement. However, our observations showed converse results as peers had provided more scaffolding on description of a graph than essay writing which may be due to the complexity of the task than simply the length of it. Anyhow, in depth study of this issue was not the focus of the current study and it can be the subject of further research.

The findings of this study hopefully provide some practical guides for researchers in this area. Scaffolding is a useful construct that must be increasingly put into practice in writing classrooms. The results of this study is limited in scope; hence, further studies are needed to investigate the verbal interaction between the teacher and peer mediators with the students to find the differences between the teachers' and peers' mediation and preferences in utilizing a particular type of scaffolding behavior than the other. Larger scale studies are also recommended to be carried out to account for the scaffolding behaviors that are applied by the teacher and peer mediators in order to develop requirements of different genres of writing. Moreover, future studies should address the effect of teacher and peer scaffolding behavior on the students' revision and writing success.

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APPENDIX 1

A sample of an essay writing task

Television has had a significant influence on the culture of many societies.
To what extent would you say that television has positively or negatively
affected the cultural development of your society?

- You should write at least 250 words.

A sample of a description of a graph task

The graph below compares the number of visits to two new music sites on the web.

Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information shown

below.

You should write at least 150 words.

